Chuck Hagel’s confirmation for defense secretary is coming by the end of January. He’ll overcome potential opposition from pro-Israel Senators. **Baron 1-23** writes[[1]](#footnote-1)

Ding dong, Hagel calling! In a door-to-door push to rival the Girl Scout cookie pushers sweeping your neighborhood, Chuck **Hagel**, President Obama’s mildly-controversial nominee to be the next secretary of defense, **is meeting with** approximately **35 senators** on Capitol Hill **this week.** That’s more ring-kissing than Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and former Defense Secretary Robert Gates did before their confirmations, combined. Hagel’s nomination has been far from usual in many respects. He’s a member of the opposition party, to start. So when his name was floated during the holiday season, the trial balloon was left out in the cold for weeks as an easy target for opponents. By the time the president made his selection official this month, Hagel’s name was thoroughly battered and key Democratic senators threatened to withhold their support. So Hagel, a former senator, offered to meet or call on all 100 members of his former stomping grounds before his confirmation comes to a vote. An official working on his confirmation told the *E-Ring* on Wednesday that **Hagel will meet with** more than 50 members -- **more than half of the** entire U.S. **Senate** -- **before his** confirmation **hearing.**  While the Senate holds the power of advice and consent over presidential nominees, Hagel has taken to auditioning for a role that likely already is his; by now there is no real opposition in the Senate that appears to block his confirmation. Sen. Chuck **Schumer** (D-NY) **backed Hagel** after they met **last week,** effectively **silencing the myth that “pro-Israel” opponents would sink Hagel. That was Hagel’s only** real **roadblock.** On Tuesday, Hagel met with Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), who said in a pool spray for television cameras afterwards that Hagel was not "taking anything for granted."  "I can understand why President Obama has chosen him," Durbin said.  Hagel also met with Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), and Team Hagel came away very encouraged even though McCain remains noncommital about his support for his fellow Vietnam veteran. The official working on Hagel's confirmation described a "productive and constructive...discussion between two long-time friends." Sen. Kelly Hagel (R-NH) met with Hagel on Wednesday, and also held her cards close. "I continue to have concerns about some of his previous positions; however, I look forward to learning more about his views during next week’s confirmation hearing. I will reserve judgment on his nomination until after that hearing.” Hagel also met Sen. Ben Carin (D-MD). Panetta never had to go through this. The current boss came directly from his post as Central Intelligence Agency director and fresh off of the mission that killed Osama bin Laden. Confirmation of his nomination was virtually preordained.   Bob Gates? “I don't recall the exact number but it was nothing like thirty,” said Geoff Morrell, former Pentagon press secretary under Gates, in an email. “We extended offers to all [Senate Armed Services Committee] members and only a handful beyond [Chairman Carl Levin (D MI) and former Ranking Member John Warner (R-VA)] took him up on it.” A second official close to Hagel’s confirmation process tells the *E-Ring* that the decision to extend offers to meet with all 100 members of the Senate was Hagel’s own, and a product of his being out of government for some time, since retiring from the Senate in 2008, and his own "due diligence." Hagel is pictured above leaving McCain's office with Marie Harf, the Obama campaign's spokeswoman for national security. Harf previously was a Central Intelligence Agency spokeswoman under Panetta with George Little, who is now Pentagon press secretary.  If any senators haven’t booked their three cups of tea with Hagel yet, they should hurry it up. **His confirmation hearing is set for January 31.**

Obama’s polcap is key to Hagel confirmation. **Jones 1-16** writes[[2]](#footnote-2)

It’s going to be a lot of work for Obama to get Congress to agree to what amounts to the biggest stride forward in gun control since the Gun Control Act was passed in 1968 in the aftermath of the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. In particular, the assault weapons ban may prove the biggest stumbling block in his negotiations with the GOP. But **the Washington Post poll found that Obama has** the greater stock of **political capital: his approval rating is** at **55 per** **cent**, compared to 24 per cent for Congressional Republicans. **And 67 per** **cent think Republican leaders should do more to compromise with Obama,** whereas just 48 per cent think Obama should do more to compromise with them. **But Obama will** be **expend**ing **that capital** on three fronts in the coming weeks: **getting** Chuck **Hagel confirmed** as Defense Secretary, raising the debt ceiling and now improving gun control.

Rehab kills political capital. **Trinick 12** writes[[3]](#footnote-3)

Reasons why criminal justice policy is ignored 1) It’s politically toxic. **Any move** to alter the current tough stance on criminal justice **is** inevitably **viewed as** being **‘soft on crime’**, regardless of how much sense a new policy might make or how much it might reduce crime in the long-run. No politician, especially one running in a race as close as the current match-up, wants to be seen as ‘soft on crime’. For Republicans, “the party of law and order”, it would be sacrilege to even suggest a change in policy. For **Democrats, especially Obama,** the **aim** appears to be **to avoid looking “weak and liberal”** and avoid alienating middle-class white voters. In addition, it lacks appeal — few voters (read ‘people likely to vote in swing states’) care about the issue as they perceive that it does not affect them and it requires hard choices to be made. 2) People don’t like to have to think about it. This relates to the point above about having to make hard choices, but there is more to it. By its very nature, criminal justice is difficult and unpleasant to think about and so most people shy away from it — who wants to think about prison and criminals when there’s the new series of Homeland? The majority of people will have no interaction with the criminal justice system, especially not on the ‘wrong’ side of it, and so they shut their eyes, pretend they cannot see the problem and hope it will go away. The politicians and media know this and cater to the demands of their audiences. 3) **Changes would require the states and the Federal government to work together. This** shouldn’t be a deal-breaker, but it **adds more complexity** to an already difficult area. Both states and the federal government maintain prisons and any systematic attempt to reduce the prison population would require co-operation and negotiation between all the parties. In gridlocked Washington, this would be unlikely even if the topic was not so politically explosive. 4) Criminal justice policy is hard. Really hard. **What should be the moral basis** for imprisoning criminals — Deterrence? **Rehabilitation?** Proportionate punishment? Public protection? **Retribution?** Economic reality? Most countries follow a mix of these, but a different balance of the justifications can alter dramatically the policy pursued in a particular jurisdiction. Agreeing on **the** precise **balance is** something **fraught with** potential for **disagreement, even among** those who have no political concerns, like **academics.** On top of this, of course, is the fact that a different weighting of the justifications can have real cost implications — for example, both rehabilitation programmes and capital punishment are hugely expensive. 5) The overlap with drug policy does not help. Realistically the only way the USA is going to reduce its prison population by a meaningful amount is either to legalise (some) drugs or to impose far lighter (non-custodial) sentences for most drug related offences. While legalisation of (some) drugs may be a good idea, it is hardly an uncontroversial one and few, if any, politicians have the gumption, or the political capital, to take on both reform of the criminal justice system and drug legalisation.

Hagel solves multiple scenarios for global conflict.

**Daniels 13** writes[[4]](#footnote-4)

As President Obama heads into his second term, and a new cabinet comes into shape, attention now focuses on the leading choice for Secretary of Defense: Chuck Hagel. As the Chairman of the Atlantic Council, and former Nebraska GOP Senator, Hagel certainly has the policy chops and political bona fides to take over the reins from the current Secretary Leon Panetta. The next secretary of defense will immediately be faced with managing American commitments and new priorities. **The Pentagon will** continue its rebalance — or "**pivot**" — **toward** the **Asia**-Pacific, where the U.S. has already been bolstering its presence in the region. At the same time, **the next secretary** of defense **will preside over a transition in Afghanistan** that insiders say appears **harder than anticipated** — both politically and operationally. **Then there's** the Middle East at large, which presents a separate set of challenges: **Egypt's rocky** political **transitions,** an intransigent **Iran, and escalating violence in Syria. Key in managing the U.S. role in** each and **all of these** situations **is recognizing the limits of American power** and influence. Fortunately, **Hagel gets** how complex **the picture** is, and would be committed to ensuring that the U.S. military does not become overextended yet again. America's commitments will also be shaped by Pentagon budget reforms. The Defense Department is scheduled to trim $487 billion in spending over the next decade. If the sequester cuts eventually do go into effect — the fiscal cliff deal only delayed them by two months — the Pentagon will face an additional $500 billion in cuts. If confirmed as the next secretary of defense, **Hagel** would already come into the position with the mindset that the Defense budget is "bloated." Moreover, his political experience on Capitol Hill **would** prove useful in **guid[e]**ing **the department through reforms that, though necessary, are** likely to be highly politicized and **contentious.** Aside from these near-term challenges, **the next secretary** of defense **will also need** to **prepare for** 21st century **threats**. Tomorrow's threats could just as easily come from non-state actors or take place **in cyberspace. Issues** once unconnected to national security — **such as the environment** — now **play critical roles** for America's military, as resource insecurity (like water or energy) can escalate the risk of conflict. During his time in the Senate and now at the Atlantic Council, **Hagel** has been a strategic thinker who **understands the interconnectedness of** an array of **threats.** He has demonstrated the ability to understand the terrain of these new battlefields, and would be well-prepared shape the military as it prepares for this new security environment. **Considering** the overall breadth and depth of **his experience**, Chuck **Hagel would bring many** relevant **strengths** to the table — which is all the more important, since the next Pentagon chief will find a full plate of challenges upon arrival.

1. Kevin Baron (national security reporter, VP of the Pentagon Press Association). “Chuck Hagel’s unusual door-to-door sales pitch,” Foreign Policy. January 23rd, 2013. http://e ring.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/23/chuck\_hagel\_s\_unusual\_door\_to\_door\_sales\_pitch [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jonathan Jones (Jonathan Jones is Director of Research at The Spectator). “Briefing: Obama and gun control.” 1-16-13. The Spectator.

   <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2013/01/briefing-obama-on-gun-control/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Richard Trinick [Currently working for a legal software start-up company in London, Richard graduated in Jurisprudence (Law) from the University of Oxford and is a future joiner of Hogan Lovells LLP. His blogging interests include just about anything with a legal or political angle on either side of the pond. Away from a computer Richard enjoys great food, exciting music, any sport except golf, and gripping TV (not to mention giving recommendations about all of these things). All opinions are his own.] Why Won’t The Candidates Talk About Prisons? 17 October 2012. <http://www.article-3.com/why-wont-the-candidates-talk-about-prisons-99475> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jessie Daniels (Truman National Security Project Fellow, worked in the US Senate) January 7, 2013 “Chuck Hagel Nomination: A Look At the Security Threats He Will Face” http://www.policymic.com/articles/21946/chuck-hagel-would-be-a-defense-secretary-for-the-21st-century [↑](#footnote-ref-4)